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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CARC AND DRL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [GG](#)  
SUBJECT: CEC CHAIR GIVES AMBASSADOR ELECTION UPDATE

REF: TBILISI 1477

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: In a follow-up to the June 18 OSCE Ambassadors Group on Elections (reftel), Ambassador met with Central Election Commission (CEC) Chairman Guram Chalagashvili on July 18. Chalagashvili said the CEC is close to completing work on the voters' list and inaccuracies are now down to "one percent." He said a door-to-door campaign to verify the list will take place in October when 27,000 election workers will conduct the checks over 25 days.

Ambassador commended Chalagashvili on including the opposition in preparing and checking the lists. Additionally, the CEC is also making progress on minority involvement in elections. Chalagashvili said a hotline will be operating in Armenian, Azeri, and Russian ahead of the elections. Chalagashvili said the CEC is emphasizing expanding training for election officials, adding that the CEC is "focusing on the regions." He said that a training plan is nearly complete. He stressed that he welcomes regular progress updates with Ambassador and will continue to work closely with the OSCE Ambassadors Group on Elections (AWG). End Summary.

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Checking it Twice  
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12. (C) Chalagashvili began the July 18 meeting with Ambassador offering an update on the AWG goals. He said the voter's lists were "our number one problem, and it is almost solved. The difference is now less than one percent." He said that door-to-door checks will take place in October and the final list will be delivered 20 days before the 2008 Presidential election. Chalagashvili stated that the CEC is working with a known company on a 5-year plan and strategy regarding the lists. They have completed the first phase (of 18 months), and will issue the lists in Georgian and English in 20 days. A copy will be made available to Ambassador. The CEC will also launch its new website in two weeks. The CEC is making working groups with a commissioner for each group, in order to support third party involvement (international observers, organizers, technical advisers, etc.) The CEC is involving the opposition in the door-to-door checks and certification of the lists. Labor and The Industrialists will each have 2 representatives, and 3 more opposition representatives will be chosen "by the competition." Poloff reiterated that involvement of the opposition in checking the lists is extremely positive and bears public awareness. Chalagashvili advised NGO's are also invited to participate in the process and a presentation for the lists with all parties and NGO's is planned. He said "We want all to participate to ensure fair elections and acceptance by all parties."

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## Minority Report

13. (C) Chalagashvili said the issue of national minorities will again be addressed. He stressed that the list in 2006 was the best possible. Improving the list for minorities in 2008 is a priority for the CEC, as is everyone being able to vote in their own language. He said each CEC member will work with their own district, and they will have a hotline operating in Azeri, Armenian and Russian for the voters. Ambassador emphasized that increasing minority participation in 2008 is a core tenet of the AWG. Chalagashvili is also trying to coordinate a public awareness campaign for minorities. He asked if the Embassy could assist with the awareness campaign and assistance in training election workers. (Comment: USAID is working on both of these issues.)

### Training Day

14. (C) Ambassador asked about the size and training of the CEC staff, and how many temporary election workers they have (current and future). Chalagashvili said the CEC has 65 full-time employees, and 5 full-timers in each district. They will temporarily hire 40 additional employees and 5 for each district during the election. 9 paid persons for each precinct will also be hired for 25 days in order to conduct the door-to-door checks. This will result in 27,000 paid election workers. Opposition members will be included among the paid workers. Talks are also underway with the government for a larger building, to accommodate more observers and training. A training plan is complete, but not

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yet signed due to financial issues. Chalagashvili hopes to solve the problem with the CEC's own funding. Ambassador advised Chalagashvili that his recent conversation with Council of Europe Representative Igor Gaon was positive regarding Georgia's electoral progress. He also emphasized the need to continue the constant struggle against corruption.

TEFFT